

CASE STUDY

Chiranji Sharma's Truck Stop Success

On the I-85 route between Atlanta, GA, and Montgomery, AL, the stretches are not too long, and the opportunities to fill up a gas tank are many. Halfway between those two large cities sits Valley, AL, the perfect place to stop for a fill-up and a snack. For the gas stations in the area, the traffic and business are brisk, but the competition is tough.

The challenges of operating on I-85 were obvious to Chiranji Sharma, a veteran of twenty years in the gas station and truck stop channels, and the owner of a truck stop on I-85 in Valley. For many years, Sharma had operated a truck stop under the Jet-Pep brand name, enjoying the fruits of his labor but feeling the need for a change to better compete with the major brands nearby.

Sharma began to research his options, focusing on raising his location's customer appeal and increasing his return on investment. He first looked to the major oil company brands but found quickly that their many restrictions hampered his ability to operate with the desired control. Likewise, he discovered that his margins and thus, his ROI, would not increase, but shrink due to higher fuel costs and credit card fees. Sharma continued to research his options.

Having exhausted his analysis of the major oil company brands, Sharma found himself considering second-tier gasoline brands, but those offered little help in raising his truck stop's profile or customer appeal. Knowing that he had to appeal to two primary audiences at once, consumer commuters and professional truck drivers, Sharma felt he needed a brand with a broad-based appeal, something that answered the professional and lifestyle wants and needs of all travelers on I-85 and the surrounding community. He needed a brand that could cut through the clutter of the pylon signs along the highway and draw people to his forecourts.

After a thorough analysis and many brands eliminated from consideration, Sharma decided to go with VP Racing Fuels' branded station program. Sharma says that VP offered him everything for which he was searching. "VP offers a program that puts the gas station or truck stop owner in charge of their own business, says Sharma, "they are easy to work with, proactively helpful, and bring along a unique brand that no others offer."

Sharma's conversion was completed in May of 2019, and he says that he has never looked back, though his review of his first year as a VP-branded dealer is impressive. All of the business metrics point to success. Across the location's eight pumps, gasoline and diesel sales have increased substantially, with premium gas sales doubling and diesel sales showing a marked tick up.

To add to Sharma's considerable plus sales at the forecourts, his in-store sales have shot up an impressive 50%, adding high-margin sales to the top line. A significant part of the in-store sales increases come from the addition of VP's professional-grade consumer products and promotional products, including Madditive® fuel and oil additives, motor oils, and outdoor equipment fuels and lubricants, plus VP-branded t-shirts and travel mugs.

Sharma attributes a good deal of his sales increases overall to VP's marketing support and lifestyle identity. He says he has never experienced such support in his career, and he feels that VP's 45-year racing heritage adds a unique lifestyle appeal to his location that no other brand can match.

Despite being near truck stops and gas stations of the major oil brands, Sharma beams when asked about his past year experience. "I researched completely, and I chose wisely," he remarks, "being part of the VP network across the country has put my business on the map."